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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT NO.

50X1

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

DATE DISTR. 23 Sept. 1955

SUBJECT Reactions to Western Leaflets

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50X1

SOURCE

Reactions to Western Leaflets

Source believed that nearly all of the Western leaflets sent to Czechoslovakia by balloon fell in the border area. At any rate, large numbers of balloons were brought down near the border by rifle fire from the members of the Border Guard. Balloons which escaped the Border Guard were often brought down shortly thereafter by fighter planes called up for the purpose.¹ The soldiers on duty along the frontier had orders to telephone through channels to the Brigade Headquarters at Volary (N 48-55, E 13-53) as soon as they sighted any balloons. The commanding officer of the Brigade in turn notified the Air Force, which sent up four or five MIG-15s to shoot down the balloons. At night and when the weather was bad, of course, the balloons were not as easily sighted or brought down. The planes were not sent up for them then, but since most of the balloons appeared to be launched during good weather and in the daytime, when there was a good eastward breeze, he supposed that few balloons reached the interior of the country. He had never heard of a balloon falling near his native village

50X1

The only measures the authorities took to prevent circulation of the leaflets, as far as source knew, consisted of the issuance of the classified orders to the Border Guard described above, of the published instructions to the public to turn in leaflets to the police, and of the punishment given people caught distributing the leaflets. Source said that agricultural laborers and others in the border areas undoubtedly found large numbers of leaflets which they took with them into the interior of the country, but he had never heard of any instances of persons in the frontier area or elsewhere being searched for leaflets alone. He had also never heard of any groups of school children or others purposely sent to collect leaflets. Persons found distributing the leaflets or suspected of doing so, however, were arrested. He recalled that

SECRET

-2-

50X1

in January or February 1955, a Border Guard recruit serving along the frontier was found to have mailed a leaflet home to his family in Moravia, when his mail, posted at his Border Guard unit, had been subjected to a routine censorship check at the Brigade Headquarters. The soldier was not punished for this, but was transferred to duty in the headquarters company at Volary, where he would not have immediate access to the border.

3. In the fall of 1954, two members of an agricultural brigade at Ceske Zleby, near Volary, were arrested by members of the Border Guard after a Border Guard agent in the work brigade denounced them for mailing home large numbers of leaflets with their laundry. At about the same time, also, another young worker was taken off a train and arrested near Ceske Budejovice when a railway employee reported that he had a whole suitcase full of leaflets which he was throwing out of the window of the train at short intervals. In both of these cases, the men were turned over to the secret police at Ceske Budejovice. The source did not know what was done with them thereafter.
4. Source never heard of anyone having put leaflets in balloting boxes in the form of an election ballot. He also never heard of anyone mailing the leaflets to the authorities, though this is not the sort of thing he would have heard about in the border area. [redacted] most people who did anything with the leaflets except read them, turned them in to the police. A considerable number of leaflets were turned in to the police by forest workers in the border regions, but he had no idea what percentage of the persons finding leaflets did this.
5. Source thought that anti-Communists, who were a large majority in the country, welcomed the leaflet action, but he was unable to be more specific than this.. [redacted] The Communists, of course, were free with remarks about "this dirty business" and "the Americans ought to use their money for more useful purposes", but source could not say what their real ideas on the subject may have been. [redacted] the leaflets were the biggest problem the Border Guard had to deal with in that area. There was no legal border crossing point in the brigade sector.
6. Source had never seen the number "10" written on a wall in Czechoslovakia. Though he had never heard that this had ever been done, he was sure that nearly everyone at least in the border regions in Czechoslovakia would have recognized it as an anti-Communist symbol. At the time of the elections in 1954 -- source didn't recall which elections -- the Border Guard was ordered to provide men to patrol the streets of Ceske Budejovice between three and four in the morning to look for leaflets which the police had heard might be thrown about the streets in the night. The Border Guards were also supposed to look for anything unauthorized which might have been written on the windows of houses in the town. As it happened, no leaflets were found and no anti-Communist slogans or markings observed.
7. A more recent leaflet containing pictures of the American and Czechoslovak flags on one side and a gummed surface on the other gave the Border Guards more worries. [redacted] officers found one of these leaflets pasted on the window of his house in a village near Volary, and several other samples of the leaflets were reported pasted in public places elsewhere in the towns around Volary.

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Cf. [redacted]

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